

Instructional Strategies A-Z

26 Strategies for Teaching ESL in the Content Areas

A	Analogies - Have students create their own examples or analogies when trying to understand and remember a general concept or vocabulary definition. This not only helps students remember the concept better, but also helps them check their own understanding.
B	Bilingual Benefits - Being bilingual leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening, gives the child a head start in language requirements for college, increases job opportunities in many careers, and gives a child the ability to communicate with people he or she would otherwise not have had the chance to know.
C	Cooperative Group Activity-Based Classrooms - ESL students succeed in activity-centered classes because of two main factors: 1) students have regular opportunities for extended discourse; and 2) students are highly motivated because they use the target language in situations of personal choice.
D	Differentiate Instruction - provide opportunities for visual, verbal linguistic, and tactile kinesthetic learners to apply their strength when learning. It means all students will not be doing the same activity in the same way all of the time.
E	Explain Expectations - Students need to be aware in advance of how they will be evaluated. To familiarize students with your expectations, do an in-class practice activity similar to the assessment, then show students how they will be evaluated. Students can work in pairs or groups during practice. Rubrics and checklists will help clarify expectations.
F	Find Key Words - To learn this list of reasons why an event in history occurred, show students how to pick out a key word for each reason and then learn just the key words.
G	Goal Setting - assist limited English proficient students in your classroom in setting personal goals for language acquisition. Make sure they learn in a proper balance; about 60% nouns, 30% verbs, and 10% adjectives and prepositions.
H	Honor the Student's Native Language - Encourage English speaking while reinforcing the value of the learner's native tongue. Never let the student feel ashamed of his or her native language or culture, and model that respect for your students.
I	Integrate Instruction - integrated learning is beneficial for all students, especially ESL learners. The ability to connect learning in one subject area to learning in another increases retention by increasing transfer.
J	<p>Justify Why, How and When - Show your students the 'how', 'when' and 'why' to use language learning strategies, and to evaluate and monitor their own learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preview teaching material and activities to identify strategies for instruction - Present strategy by naming it and explaining when and why to use it - Model the strategy Provide opportunities to practice the strategy with various activities/tasks - Develop students' ability to evaluate strategy use Develop skills to transfer strategy use to new tasks <p>(Adapted from Scope and Sequence Frameworks for Learning Strategy)</p>

Instruction in O'Malley & Chamot, 1995, pp. 158-9)

Know Student's Learning Styles - use a learning styles inventory or observation to discover the learning style or multiple intelligence in which each student has a dominant strength. Use that knowledge to prescribe the best learning options for the student, and let students know the results so they will know the best ways for them to study.

Learn Their Language - Students will relax and feel comfortable in your classroom if you make an effort to learn their vocabulary. Simply asking ESL students to say words or phrases in their native tongue can increase trust and empathy on both sides.

Memory Techniques - Have students learn how to group items into categories in order to memorize them. If they have a long list of things to memorize, show them how to group similar items together or to use anagrams for memory recall.

No Busy Work - Set reasonable goals for the material your English language learners should be responsible for. Be sure it is relevant. Adapt tests if necessary to fairly assess what your students should be able to do. There is no point in their memorizing a list of spelling words, for example, if they do not understand what the words mean.

Oral Summaries, Outlines, Venn Diagrams, and Mind Maps - should be used to assist ESL learners. Teachers should try to use visual reviews with lists and charts; paraphrase the salient points where appropriate; and have students provide oral summaries themselves.

Promote and Practice the Power of Patterns - know the basic language patterns for the second language and know how they compare to English patterns. Give students opportunities to recognize and practice the patterns.

Quit Talking So Much - ESL learners improve their fluency when they have opportunities to speak. Pair and share activities after a brief teacher talk will help ESL learners to check their comprehension with a buddy.

Retroactivity and Repetition - use both to increase language proficiency. Repetition is how many times you repeat something in a given time period, retroactivity is how long you use and apply it from when you initially learned it. Return to vocabulary from previous units and give students a chance to apply those terms in a new instructional topic. Just like in physical exercise, the number of repetitions and the retroactivity increase strength.

Six Facets of Understanding - in order for learners to deeply understand a topic, it must be experienced from all six facets. Learners should be able to Explain, Apply, Interpret, and also gain Empathy, Perspective and Self-knowledge.

Think Aloud - Use "think-out-loud" modeling. "Listen to me think out loud". Take a "tour" of a reading selection showing students how you scan the text first looking at pictures, graphics, and titles. Share the questions you have about the text before you begin reading.

Use Visuals and Graphic Organizers - to support ESL students' efforts at reading lengthy sections of text, graphic organizers can aid in identifying the important information you want them to find. Break lengthy sections down and

	have student group discussions between the shorter text segments. Teach students to visualize what they're trying to learn. Have them create a mental image or organize information on a graphic organizer.
V	Value Diversity - demonstrate an interest in and support of students whose background differs from your own. Know the strengths that accepting diversity has to offer us as a nation. Share those benefits with your students.
W	Written Compositions - allow students to write a first draft in their native tongue to get a fluency and cohesiveness of ideas. While other students are revising and editing, ESL students can translate into English. Babelfish is a good online resource to assist students in translating http://babelfish.altavista.com/babelfish/tr
X	Xperiment (Encourage Experimentation) - a child needs to experiment and produce utterances that may be inaccurate yet reflect normal language development. In this way, the child is attempting to figure out the patterns and rules that govern the language. To correct the child's speech, grammar or spelling, teachers should rephrase or expand on what the child has already said or written. Feedback from peers will also help the children determine correct from incorrect ways of communicating. They test these chunks of language by using them in situations that may or may not be appropriate. The feedback they receive helps them determine whether they have guessed correctly. Positive feedback works best.
Y	Youth Role Models - for each subpopulation, know the leaders in your community that have been successful transitioning into the American culture speaking English. Involve them in your classroom for the benefit of all students. Students older, but closer to their age will have a greatest impact. High school students could visit elementary classrooms as role models, and college students or graduates can greatly impact current high school students.
Z	Zeal for Higher Order Thinking - teachers must create opportunities to focus on thinking skills including predicting, categorizing generalizing and making inferences which are easily addressed in the warm-up and motivation phases of a lesson; observing, reporting and classifying, which can be done orally, in writing or pictorially, and which fit nicely into presentation and application phases; and sequencing, summarizing and justifying, which fit well in lesson reviews. (adapted from <i>How to Integrate Language and Content Instruction</i> , Center for Applied Linguistics, 1991 by Deborah J. Short)